

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 1.3
September 2010

Committee roles

If your group is going to work effectively and achieve what you want to do, you need a good committee to help make it happen.

Members and office bearers need to understand what each committee position entails; this Landcare Note will help define the roles and responsibilities.

What are the key roles?

The committee has been set up to represent your group and manage all its responsibilities including finance, project planning, insurance, publicity and record keeping.

The committee structure should be set out in your constitution and usually includes key roles such as president, secretary and treasurer, as well as other committee members, all of whom are responsible to the full membership.

You will need about six to eight people on the committee to manage your group efficiently. When you are appointing key roles, also choose a vice president and assistant secretary who can help the key member and, hopefully, take over if that member is not available or when they decide to move on.

How committees work

Most groups appoint office bearers and committee members at the first meeting and their positions then come up for election at each Annual General Meeting (AGM) (see Landcare Note 1.4: *Meeting types*).

The roles and responsibilities of these people are given below, although they may vary if your group (and your constitution) decides otherwise. It is important to make sure committee members share the workload (see Landcare Note 8.5: *Sharing the load – delegation*).

President

The president is the leader and anchor of your group and has several roles including:

Leadership and coordination

If you are the president, your job entails motivating members, delegating tasks to them and involving them in activities, making sure all the projects are on time, targeting, budgeting and helping your members write submissions and grant applications (see Landcare Note 8.1: *Effective leadership*).

Convening meetings

You also call the meetings and prepare the agenda (with help from the secretary), set the business priorities for the meeting and ensure the venue and any guest speakers have been arranged (see Landcare Note 1.5: *Effective meetings*).

Chairing meetings

At any meeting, as president, you must act as chair, welcoming and introducing members and guests, encouraging discussion but also keeping the meeting focused on the agenda, ensuring a resolution is reached.

You must make sure that the decisions and actions are clearly recorded in the minutes and that everyone in the group is aware of what has been decided (see Landcare Notes: 1.5 *Effective meetings*, 6.1 *Effective communication in your group*).

Representation

As president, you may be the first point of contact between your group and other people. That also means signing all official documents on behalf of the group and attending functions as a representative.

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Secretary

The secretary looks after the group's administration and has specific tasks that include:

Correspondence

If you are the secretary, you will manage all correspondence, maintain official records and ensure that all information, both internal and external (including magazines, newsletters and technical information) is available to all those who want access to it (see Landcare Notes: 6.1 *Effective communication in your group*; 4.2 *Keeping records*).

Meetings

As secretary, you will help the president in preparing the agenda for the meeting and maintaining accurate minutes of everything that happens. Your job also entails ensuring the minutes are distributed to all members, along with any notices or agendas for future meetings. The secretary also makes sure that all correspondence at the meeting is available for anyone who needs to read it. Other duties you may have include acting as the group's contact person or representative, helping other members with grant applications and funding enquiries and organising any official documents that need to be taken care of including letters, leases, insurance policies and funding agreements.

Treasurer

The treasurer manages the group's finances on behalf of the committee. All transactions must be documented, including cash receipts from group functions, and account payments must be passed for payment at a committee meeting.

As the treasurer, you: manage every money transaction involving the group (including banking and full and accurate record keeping with relevant correspondence), issue invoices and receipts, pay the group's bills and accounts and manage petty cash (see Landcare Note 4.3: *Banking*).

As treasurer, you're also responsible for all financial reporting which means developing finance reports or keeping a cash book stating all income and expenditure and providing regular financial reports to the committee (see Landcare Note 4.4: *Budgeting*).

You will need to provide a financial report for the AGM and maintain a file of all documents relating to the group's finances including anything on incorporation, tax deductions, GST, permits or licences and insurance policies.

Committee members

All committee members are responsible for promoting and explaining the group's work, actively supporting the group as a whole and supporting other committee members (see Landcare Note 8.5: *Sharing the load – delegation*).

As a committee member, you could be given a specific role, such as vice president (acting in the absence of the president and preparing for a future role), assistant secretary or treasurer, newsletter editor or project manager.

Something to think about

It is worth developing a list of key tasks that the group must do (see Landcare Note 9.3: *What skills and knowledge does the group have*)? You can then ask your committee members what they are interested in doing or if they have skills they want to use or develop. This will mean you have a range of people contributing to running your group and helps keep people interested and involved. It also makes sure the group is using their skills wisely.



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Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway Resources for groups: www.landcarevic.net.au

Building Stronger Communities:
www.ourcommunity.com.au

Galbally, Rhonda (2005) - *Guide for Community Treasurers:*
http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/community_treasurers_guide.pdf

Gutmann, Joanna (2001) – *Taking Minutes of Meetings;* Kogan Page, Melbourne.

McFarlane, G, Carpenter, J and Youl, R (1996) - *Group Skills and Community Action:*
http://web.archive.org/web/20050315170751/www.neon.net.au/community/environment/grp_skills/

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 1.1: *Starting up a Landcare group*

Landcare Note 1.4: *Meeting types*

Landcare Note 1.5: *Effective meetings*

Landcare Note 4.2: *Keeping records*

Landcare Note 4.3: *Banking*

Landcare Note 4.4: *Budgeting*

Landcare Note 6.1: *Effective communication in your group*

Landcare Note 8.1: *Effective leadership*

Landcare Note 8.5: *Sharing the load – delegation*

Landcare Note 9.3: *What skills and knowledge does the group have?*

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